



THE FIVE “PEOPLES” OF TSOPK/SOPHENE

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The *vilayet* of Harput (Kharpert), later renamed Mamuret ul-Aziz after the Ottoman Sultan Abdul-Aziz (1861-76), occupied by and large the territory of the ancient Armenian kingdom of Tsopk or, as the Greeks called it, Sophene. This kingdom consisted of the lower or western basin of the Aratsani River, known to the Greeks as the Arsaias and to the Turks today as the Murat Su. In this region, there were in ancient and early medieval times, twelve districts comprising five Armenian principalities, which in the mid-sixth century A.D. were combined to form a Byzantine province. The seventh-century Armenian Geography (*Ashkharhatsoyts*) attributed to Ananias of Shirak (Anania Shirakatsi) gives the only description of this part of Armenia as a Byzantine administrative unit, and it is important because it lists, besides the five principalities, the twelve districts of which they were composed.¹

The second land of Armenia, Fourth Armenia, that is the Region of Tsopk [*Chorrord Hayk or e Tsopats Koghm*], borders Upper Armenia [on the north]. It is bounded on the west by the city of Melitene, on the south by Mesopotamia, and on the east by Tarawn [Taron]. It has eight districts: Khordzayn, to the northeast through which flows the other River Gayl by the castle of Kogh; Hashteank, where rise the sources of the Tigris; west of Khordzayn is the district of Paghmatun with the castle of the same name [Paghin]. Opposite to the south is the district of Balahovit; to the west of it, Tsopk and the district of Handzit to the south in which are Tsovk and Hore castles; to the west of them, the district of Degik in which are located the

¹ *The Geography of Ananias of Širak (Ašxarac'oyc')*: *The Long and Short Recensions*, intro., trans., and comm., Robert H. Hewsen (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert, 1992), p. 59 and map XII, cited hereafter as Ananias, *Geography*.

castles of Krni, Kruik and Sok; opposite to the south, is the district of Gawrek. Through this [land] flows the Aratsani, which joins the Euphrates at the city of Lusatarich. Circling towards the west, it reaches the frontier of Lesser Armenia, east of Melitene, after which it receives the River Kavkas coming from the west from the mountain of Zigon Basilikon. Before its confluence with the Euphrates, it receives the River Karaminon coming from the Taurus Mountains and, having been received by the Euphrates, it flows south and cleaves the Taurus where rock crystal is found. Fourth Armenia has [many kinds of] animals, fowl, and among its wild beasts, the lion.

Although little is known about the kingdom of Tsopk/Sophene, we do know something about the history of the five principalities that seem to have been its divisions: Greater Tsopk, Lesser Tsopk, Angeghtun-Handzit, Balahovit, and Hashteanak. The first three were acquired by the Romans in 299 and the last two about 377-78.² These principalities or “peoples” as they were called in the Roman Empire—*ethne* in Greek;³ *gentes* in Latin⁴—survived under Roman/Byzantine rule for 250 years before they were finally suppressed and their territories combined to form an imperial province called Fourth Armenia. The continued existence of these Armenian principalities for so long within the frontiers of the empire attests to the vigor of the princes who ruled them and to the importance attached to them by the Roman/Byzantine emperors in spite of their minuscule size. The suppression of these principalities in the mid-sixth century meant that no Armenians would ever again rule this quintessential part of the Armenian heartland.

The five principalities of Tsopk were as follows:

- 1) In the far north lay Tsopk Shahuni or Pokr Tsopk, that is Royal

² Cyril Toumanoff, *Studies in Christian Caucasian History* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1963), p. 166n63, quoting Peter the Patrician, *Fragmenta*, in Theodorus Müller, ed., *Fragmenta historicorum graecorum*, vol. 4 (Paris: A. Firmin Didot: 1851), frag. 14, p.189.

³ The term *ethne* is used in Justinian, *Novella XXXI*, in *Corpus Juris Civilis: Novellae*, Rudolf Schöll and Willhelm Kroll, eds., 6th ed. (Berlin: Apud Weidmannos, 1912); repr. in N[ikoghayos] Adontz, *Armenia v epokhu Iustiniana*, trans. and comm. Nina G. Garsoïan, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian* (Lisbon: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1970), p. 25. Further citations are to the English translation.

⁴ The term *gentes* is used in *Justinian's Code*, Book I.xxviii, repr. in Adontz, *Armenia*, p. 2.

or Lesser Tsopk—including within it the two districts of Lesser Tsopk proper⁵ and Degik (Degisene),⁶ which together formed a single principality.⁷ The term "royal" used to describe it strongly suggests that the two districts formed a part of the royal domains of the Sophenean kings. Its center appears to have been the town of Chemesghadzak, which the Greeks called Hierapolis (Holy City) and the Byzantines, Kosomakhon, now Çimişgezek. Here in Degik in the seventh century, there were also located the three Armenian fortresses of Kruik, Krni, and Sok.⁸

2) In the far south was located Mets Tsopk, that is, Greater Tsopk,⁹ known to the Greeks as Sophanene.¹⁰ Its center seems to have been the town of Npret or Nprkert, later known as Martirosats Kaghak (City of Martyrs).¹¹ Amida (now Diarbekir or Diyarbakir), Arghn (Ergani or Erghani), and Abarne all lay in this principality as did the later town of Chunkush.

3) In between these first two principalities was found Angeghtun¹²

⁵ Ananias, *Geography*, p. 156n35. The Greek form *Sophene* is found in Ptolemy's *Geography*, Nobbe ed. (Leipzig, 1843-1845; repr. Hildesheim, 1966), V.13.13; the form *Tzophene* in Justinian's *Novella XXXI*, in Adontz, *Armenia*, p. 35.

⁶ Ananias, *Geography*, p. 156n39.

⁷ Degik was not a principality in the Arshakuni (Arsacid) period and, cut off as it was from the rest of Armenia by Lesser Sophene, must have been a part of the latter principality. Very late in the Byzantine period reference is made to princes of Digisene, but these are either from a new house or a house from the lesser nobility (*azatk*), which had risen in status because of the breakdown of the earlier Armenian social order.

⁸ Ananias, *Geography*, p. 156n40.

⁹ Mets Tsopk is not found in the *Ashkharhatsoyts*. The Greek form *Sophene* is found in Procopius, *de aedificiis* [The Buildings] (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), III.ii.1; the variant *Tzophanene* is in Justinian's *Novella XXXI*. Among Armenian authors only the unknown author of the *Buzandaran Patmutiunk* uses the Armenian form (at III.ix, xii, xiv, IV.iv, xxiv, xxx; V.xvii, xxvii-xxviii). See *The Epic Histories (Buzandaran Patmut'iwkn') Attributed to P'awstos Buzand*, trans. and comm. Nina G. Garsoïan (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989; Armenian ed., St. Petersburg, 1883; repr. Delmar, NY: Caravan Press, 1984).

¹⁰ Suren T. Eremyan, *Hayastane est "Ashkharhatsoyts"-i* [Armenia According to the "Ashkharhatsoyts"] (Erevan, Armenian Academy of Sciences, 1963), p. 118.

¹¹ Ananias, *Geography*, p. 154; Adontz, *Armenia*, pp. 9-10.

¹² The district of Angeghtun does not appear in the *Ashkharhatsoyts*. For details on its locations, see Adontz, *Armenia*, pp. 33-35; Toumanoff, *Christian Caucasian History*, pp. 175-76.

(Greek: Ingilene)¹³ and Handzit¹⁴ (Greek: Anzitene),¹⁵ a single principality¹⁶ comprising the three districts of Angeghtun, Handzit, and Gaurek (Gaurene).¹⁷ Its center was the fortress of Anggh (Angegh), later known as the town of Agn or Eghin.¹⁸ The center of Handzit probably was at Horeberd,¹⁹ the possible site of Roman Anzita;²⁰ the center of Gaurek lay probably at Lusatarich, the modern Keban Maden.²¹ The heart of Handzit and the whole of Sophene was the plain of Kharpert, known to Western Armenians in modern times as the Voskedasht or Golden Plain (Turkish: Altinova). In antiquity the beauty of this plain was already known to the Greeks who called it Anthisene—"the flowery district" or "Florida."²²

4) To the east of Tsopk Shahuni lay the principality of Balahovit,²³ comprising the three districts of Balahovit,²⁴ Paghnatun,²⁵ and Khordzean,²⁶ (Greek: Balabitenne,²⁷ Palines,²⁸ and Khortsianene or

¹³ Peter the Patrician, in Müller, *Fragmenta*, pp. 181-91, where the name is spelled as Intelene, probably a copyist's error.

¹⁴ Ananias, *Geography*, p. 156n36.

¹⁵ Ptolemy, *Geography*, V.13.18.

¹⁶ Toumanoff, *Christian Caucasian History*, pp. 131, 171-72.

¹⁷ Gaurek was not a principality in the Arshakuni/Arsacid period and, cut off as it was from the rest of Armenia by Handzit/Anzitene, must have been a part of the latter district.

¹⁸ Adontz, *Armenia*, pp. 25, 241, 271, 456n21, 491n48, 520n72; Toumanoff, *Christian Caucasian Studies*, pp. 167-68, 299-301; Thomas A. Sinclair, *Eastern Turkey: An Architectural and Archaeological Survey*, vol. 3 (London: Pindar Press, 1987), pp. 196-200.

¹⁹ Ananias, *Geography*, p. 156n38.

²⁰ Ptolemy, *Geography*, V.13.19.

²¹ Ananias, *Geography*, p. 156n43.

²² Polybius' reference (vii.23.1) to the *Kalepedion* "beautiful plain" is probably to the plain of Kharpert as well. Eremyan, *Hayastane*, p. 43, cites the Anthias of Michael Attaliotes' *Historia* and the form Anthisene but identifies these Greek toponyms with Balahovit and suggests that the Akisene of Strabo (11.14.5) is a corrupted form that should be identified with it as well. J.D. Howard-Johnston, after a close examination of Attaliotes, has come to the conclusion that Anthias is to be identified with the plain of Ovajik in the upper valley of the Muzur River.

²³ For Balahovit as a principality, see Adontz, *Armenia*, pp. 27, 36-37; Toumanoff, *Christian Caucasian History*, p. 172; Ananias, *Geography*, pp. 155-56n34.

²⁴ Toumanoff, *Christian Caucasian History*, pp. 153-54.

²⁵ Ananias, *Geography*, p. 155n32.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 155n28.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 155n34.

²⁸ Georgius of Cyprus, *Descriptio orbis Romani*, ed. Heinrich Gelzer (Leipzig:

Khorzanue²⁹). Its center was the ancient Urartian fortress of Palu (Greek: Paluous) located in Balahovit proper.³⁰ The center of Pagh-natun was the fortress of Paghin (Greek: Palios),³¹ that of Khordzean, the fortress of Koghoberd, the later town of Kghi.³²

5) Finally, to the southeast of Balahovit lay the principality of Hashteank,³³ which the Greeks called Astaunitis³⁴ and the Byzantines, Asthianene.³⁵ Its original center was probably the fortress of Ulor (Greek: Haluris), guarding the main pass through this stretch of the Taurus Mountains. Later it was centered at the fortress of Ktrich, which the Greeks called Kitamon³⁶ and the Byzantines, Kitharizon.³⁷ This principality was royal land belonging to the kings of Armenia and was set aside for the support of the king's younger sons, who were required to live there.³⁸ It had possibly been a part of the royal domains of the kings of Sophene, as well.

The origin of these five principalities, how far back they go in history or whether or not they were in existence as a part of the kingdom of Sophene, is uncertain. The princes of Lesser Sophene (Pokr Tsopk) may have been descended from the original rulers of the kingdom of Tsopk/Sophene and may even have gone back to pre-Armenian times.³⁹ The princes of Angeghtun-Handzit and Greater Sophene or Sophanene (Mets Tsopk) appear to have been branches of the Orontid/Ervandian dynasty,⁴⁰ which had secured control of

B.G. Teubner, 1890), line 962a.

²⁹ Procopius, *de aedificiis*, II.iii.9.

³⁰ Sinclair, *Eastern Turkey*, pp. 117-25.

³¹ Ibid., p. 127.

³² Ibid., pp. 130, 140 for Koghoberd (where the Armenian form is incorrectly given as the Roman Kogoberd).

³³ Ananias, *Geography*, p. 155n31; Adontz, *Armenia*, p. 16.

³⁴ Ptolemy, *Geography*, V.13.13.

³⁵ The form Asthianene is found as Asthianine in Procopius, *de aedificiis*, III.iii.7, and as Astianikes in Georgius of Cyprus, *Descriptio orbis Romani*, line 964.

³⁶ Ptolemy, *Geography*, V.13.16.

³⁷ Procopius, *de aedificiis*, III.iii.7.

³⁸ Movses Khorenatsi, *Patmutiun Hayots* [History of the Armenians], ed. Manuk Abeghian and Set Harutiunian (Tiflis: Martirosiants, 1913); Moses Khorenats'i, *History of the Armenians*, trans. and comm. Robert W. Thomson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), II.8, 22, 62, pp. 144, 159, 205.

³⁹ Toumanoff, *Christian Caucasian History*, p. 162.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 167.

Sophene in the third century B.C.⁴¹ The princes of Balahovit were possibly descended from the chiefs of a tribe called Bala mentioned in Assyrian records in this part of Armenia,⁴² and the princes of Hashtean in the Arsacid/Arshakuni period were always younger brothers of the heir to the Armenian throne.

Cities were not numerous in ancient and early medieval Armenia. Most of the urban centers were uncomparable with those in the Roman and Persian empires, but Sophene had an important city, Arshamashat,⁴³ known to the Greeks as Arsamosata.⁴⁴ Founded by King Arsham at a site on the Aratsani River (now inundated by the great lake created by the construction of a modern dam), this city apparently did not remain the capital of Sophene for very long.⁴⁵ For some reason, perhaps religious, the capital moved to the fortress-shrine of Anggh, which the Armenians also called Arkatiakert⁴⁶ and the Greeks and Romans, Karkathiokerta,⁴⁷ Artagigarta,⁴⁸ and perhaps Epiphaneia.⁴⁹ Here, at Arkatiakert, was located the temple of the Anggh or Tork, god of the underworld in Armenian paganism. He was the patron deity of the Sophenean royal family, and from his cult the site took its common name, Anggh; later Armenians renamed it Agn.⁵⁰

Other towns in Sophene included Khosomakhon, Palu, and Amida, now Diarbekir, which was fortified by the Romans in the fourth century and only then became a large city.⁵¹ There was also Martyro-

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Sinclair, *Eastern Turkey*, p. 112.

⁴⁴ Ptolemy, *Geography*, V.13.19.

⁴⁵ Toumanoff, *Christian Caucasian History*, p. 281.

⁴⁶ Eremyan, *Hayastane*, p. 35, under "Anggh." The form Arkatiakert has been reconstructed by working backwards from the Greek Karkathiokerta and Latin Artagigarta.

⁴⁷ Strabo, *Geography*, Loeb Classical Library Edition (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), XI.14.2.

⁴⁸ Ptolemy, *Geography*, V.13.22.

⁴⁹ S.T. Eremyan, *Haykakan petutyune Tigran Metsi zhamanakashrjanum* [The Armenian Empire in the Time of Tigranes the Great] (Erevan: Armenian Academy of Sciences, 1979), wall map.

⁵⁰ Toumanoff, *Christian Caucasian History*, pp. 167-68.

⁵¹ Amida was fortified by Emperor Constantius II in 349. Prior to that it was an unimportant place and was unknown to Ptolemy in the second century A.D. It is cited in the third-century *Tabula Peutingeria*, repr. in Adontz, *Armenia*, p. 134, as the

polis,⁵² a great Christian center that arose about the same time on the site of the Armenian town of Npret or Nprkert,⁵³ called Mayafarkin by the Arabs, and Farkin by the Ottomans, now Silvan.⁵⁴ The kingdom of Sophene also had several fortresses: Horeberd, probably the later Armenian Kharberd or Kharpert,⁵⁵ Tmnis (Greek: Tomisa),⁵⁶ which became an important Roman military base guarding the crossing of the Euphrates River, Dascusa, yet a second Roman base on what one would expect to be the Armenian side of the Euphrates,⁵⁷ Handzit,⁵⁸ and Bnabegh (Greek: Benabila),⁵⁹ which was a royal castle where the Armenian kings stored a portion of their treasure.⁶⁰

There were, of course, many villages in Sophene, some of them of historical interest. Erand (Greek: Rhandeia), for example, was the site of the signing of a major treaty between Rome and Persia in 63 A.D.;⁶¹ Kho[l]kh (Greek: Kolkhis) stood on one of the main Roman

starting point for a route to Tigranakert (incidentally proving that Amida/Diarbekir cannot be the site of Tigranakert).

⁵² See note 11 above.

⁵³ Ananias, *Geography*, p. 161n48. Adontz, *Armenia*, p. 11, cites the Syriac form, Mefrkt, and another later Armenian form, Muharkin.

⁵⁴ Sinclair, *Eastern Turkey*, p. 287.

⁵⁵ See notes 19-20 above. In citing Kharpert as a fortress, as its name implies, it should be mentioned that the name does not mean "Rock Castle" as is often seen in popular writings. "Rock" in Armenian is *kar*, whereas the name of this castle in modern Armenian uses the form *Khar*. The form *Khar-pert* or *Khar-berd* most likely derives from Hore, the name of the ancient Khurrians or Hurrians, who once inhabited the Armenian Plateau and probably gave their name to the district of Khordzean. They were succeeded in Armenia by the Urartians, who spoke a Khurrian/Hurrian language.

⁵⁶ Tmnis lay on the eastern (Armenian) bank of the Euphrates River but appears to have been held by Roman forces. Originally controlled by Cappadocia, Tmnis was sold to Sophene in the second century B.C. See David Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor*, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), vol. 1, p. 370; Eremyan, *Hayastane*, p. 53.

⁵⁷ The exact location of Dascusa is uncertain, but see David French, "New Research on the Euphrates Frontier," in Stephen Mitchell, ed., *Armies and Frontiers in Roman and Byzantine Anatolia* (Ankara: British Institute of Archaeology, 1983), pp. 71-101, Map 7.1, p. 99.

⁵⁸ The Anzita or Anzeta of Ptolemy, *Geography*, V.13.19.

⁵⁹ Bnabegh is probably the Babila of Ptolemy, *Geography*, V.13.17.

⁶⁰ Toumanoff, *Christian Caucasian History*, p. 168.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 76-77.

roads to Mesopotamia;⁶² Dadem (Tadem; Greek: Dadima) became a Byzantine provincial capital.⁶³ Sophene passed back and forth between Roman and Persian rule and at times was revived as an independent state. In 298, however, after a series of long wars, the Romans crushed the Persians in Armenia and the following year forced them to sign the Treaty of Nisibis⁶⁴ by which Persia surrendered to Rome several Armenian principalities, including Tsopk, Greater Tsopk, and Angeghtun-Handzit.⁶⁵ Some time later, two other districts were added to these three,⁶⁶ and since we know the Romans held Balahovit and Hashteank soon after, it would appear that these were the two that were acquired in about 377-78.⁶⁷ As Cyril Toumanoff has shown, these statelets enjoyed the status of *civitates foederatae*, "autonomous polities which were bound to the Empire, not as a consequence of a conquest, but in virtue of an agreement or treaty, and thus owed their sovereign rights to no concession on the part of the protecting power."⁶⁸

Now a curiosity of all this is that although these principalities were ceded to Rome, Armenian sources show that as long as the Armenian Arshakuni kingdom lasted—that is to say until 428 A.D.—all five of them played a fully participatory role in the life of that kingdom.⁶⁹ This raises the question then as to exactly what was meant when the Treaty of Nisibis granted these territories to Rome in 299. The Romans did not remove the Armenian princes, they appointed no Roman governors over them, they quartered no Roman troops in their territories, and they levied no taxes. Surely this is one of the lightest forms of foreign occupation on record. What is probably most likely, as Toumanoff has suggested, was that the close ties that linked Armenia to Rome between 299 and 387 made it possible for

⁶² *Tabula Peutingeriana*, p. cvii.

⁶³ J.D. Howard-Johnston, "Byzantine Anzitene," in Mitchell, *Armies and Frontiers in Roman and Byzantine Anatolia*, p. 250.

⁶⁴ Toumanoff, *Christian Caucasian History*, pp. 170-71, 175-76.

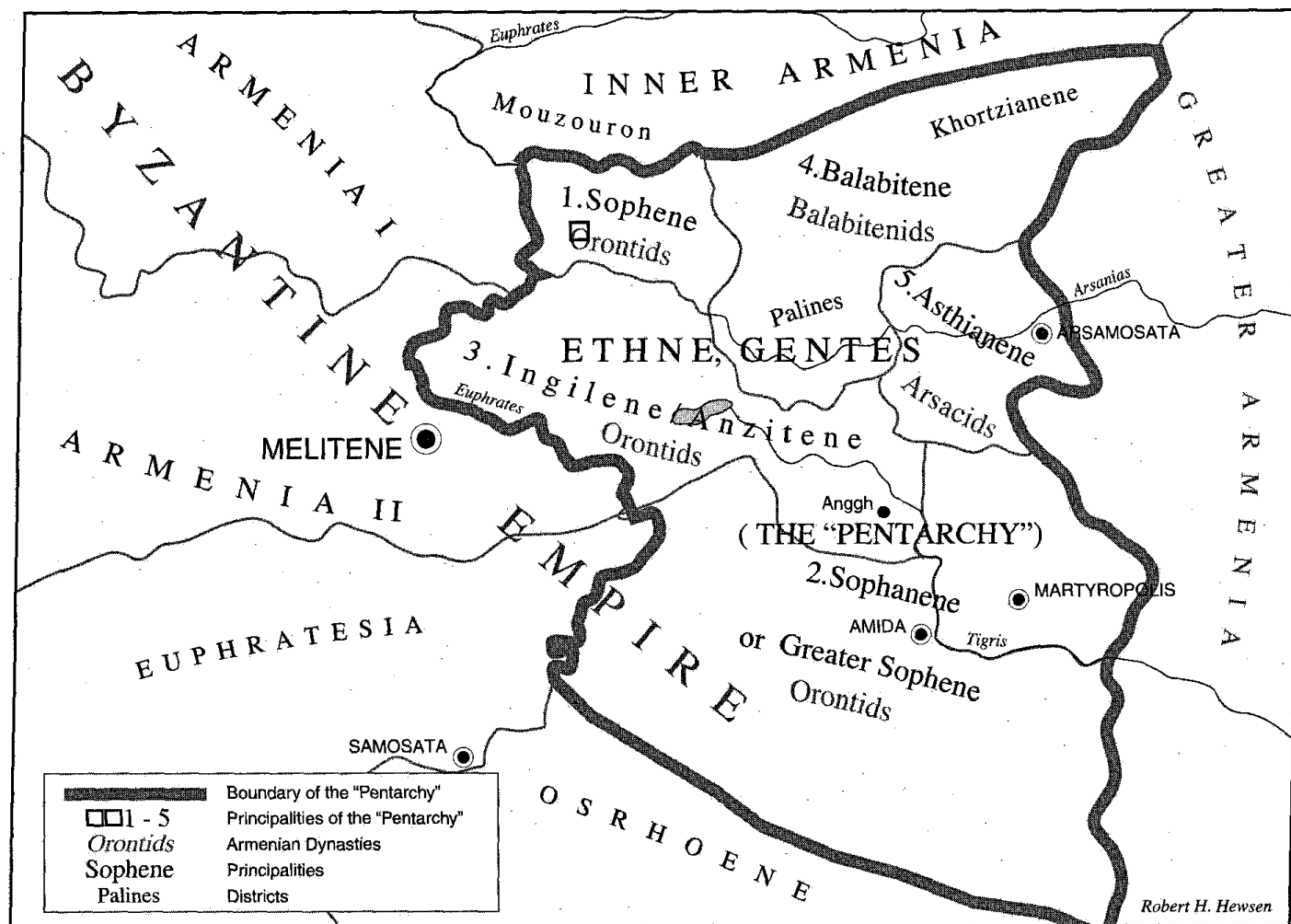
⁶⁵ Peter the Patrician, in Müller, *Fragmenta*, pp. 181-91.

⁶⁶ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Rerum gestarum libri XXXI*, Loeb Classical Library Edition, 3 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982-1987), vol. 3, xxx.2.4.5.

⁶⁷ Toumanoff, *Christian Caucasian History*, p. 133.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 170.



The Pentarchy of Sophene

the princes of Sophene to deal freely with the neighboring Armenian kingdom since they and the kings and princes of Greater Armenia were all vassals of Rome at one and the same time.⁷⁰

Not the least curious aspect of these five Armenian principalities is the terms by which they were called. Today, they are referred to as the Pentarchy—a quintet of principalities governed under native rulers. In Greek, however, they were called *ethne* and in Latin *gentes*—both of which mean “peoples.” Why would the Romans refer to these territories as “peoples.” One tentative answer may be suggested: The Armenian term for a noble family in its capacity as a long-lived historical clan was *azg*, a word that in Classical Armenian can mean nation, tribe, clan, and—precisely—people.⁷¹ Yet another way to refer to these principalities in Greek was *satrapai* or in Latin *satrapiae* (satrapies),⁷² a curious term, for it is a Persian administrative title and suggests that the princes were thought of as hereditary governors of their principalities on the Persian model as opposed to appointed governors of the Roman kind. In any case, this term so used has had a baleful effect on later classical writers who tend to use the term “satrap” for any Armenian prince, an incorrect usage that ignores their hereditary and sovereign status.⁷³

Another curiosity in regard to these five principalities is the enormous regard that was extended to their rulers by the Roman government. These principalities were small and weak to the point of being powerless, yet their rulers were treated as minor kings and allowed by Rome to carry regalia and wear boots that were hitherto accorded only to royalty.⁷⁴ Procopius, official historian of Emperor Justinian, has given a description of these accouterments:

There is a cloak made of wool, not such as is produced by sheep, but

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 171.

⁷¹ The *Nor bargirk haykazian lezvi* [New Dictionary of the Classical Armenian Language], 2 vols. (Venice: Mekhitarist Press, 1822; repr., Erevan: Armenian Academy of Sciences, 1979-1981), vol. 1, p. 6, under the entry *azg* has as Greek translations *genos*, *genea*, and *ethnos*, and as Latin renderings *genus*, *generatio*, and *gens*.

⁷² Latin: *satrapae*; see *Codex Theodosianus, Liber XII Titulus XIII De auro coronario*, in Adontz, *Armenia*, p. 2. Greek: *satrapai*; see Procopius, *de aedificiis*, III.1.7.

⁷³ Toumanoff, *Christian Caucasian History*, p. 107n165.

⁷⁴ Procopius, *de aedificiis*, III.1.18-23.

gathered from the sea. *Pinnos* the creature is called on which this wool grows. And the part where the purple should have been, that is, where the insertion of purple cloth is usually made, is overlaid with gold. The cloak was fastened by a golden brooch in the middle of which was a precious stone from which hung three sapphires by loose golden chains. There was a tunic of silk adorned in every part with decorations of gold which they are wont to call *plumia*. The boots were of red colour and reached to the knee, of the sort which only the Roman Emperor and the Persian King are permitted to wear.⁷⁵

Why would the Romans, who had little use for hereditary nobility or status based on royal descent, show such concern for the sensitivities of these five petty Armenian princelings? The answer, I believe, lies in the nature of Armenia, a large country made up of dozens of small principalities. It seems likely that the Romans, by treating the Armenian princes under their sway with such dignity and respect, were hoping to attract other Armenian princes into a pro-Roman stance, perhaps even (as in the cases of the princes of Balahovit and Hashtean) enticing them into voluntary acceptance of Roman rule.

Though the Romans may have treated the five princes of the Pentarchy with the greatest deference, they nevertheless took their own overlordship seriously. In the years 482-84, a former general and close associate of Emperor Zeno, named Illus, rebelled against Zeno and, for whatever reason, the Pentarchs, except for the prince Balahovit, rose up on his side. Illus was defeated, however, his movement put down, and in 488 all of the Pentarchs, disloyal and loyal alike, were made to pay. By a decree of that year, the five princes seem to have been deprived of their right to be succeeded by their eldest sons, at least without Roman approval. No longer *civitates foederatae*, they were reduced to the status of *civitates stipendiariae*, paying taxes like everyone else.⁷⁶

In spite of this setback, the Pentarchy continued until the reforms of Emperor Justinian fifty years later. Obviously, the Pentarchs themselves had lost the confidence of the imperial government, which now moved to eliminate them. In the period 528 to 536, a series of edicts effectively reduced the previously autonomous

⁷⁵ Ibid., III.1.20-23.

⁷⁶ Toumanoff, *Christian Caucasian History*, p. 173.

princes of the Pentarchy to the equivalent of private citizens.⁷⁷ By a decree of 528, the entire military forces of imperial Armenia, including those of the Pentarchy, were placed under the Master of Soldiers (*Magister Militum*) for Armenia, Pontus, and the Gentes, with an imperial military governor sitting at the fortress of Theodosiopolis (Armenian: Karin; present-day Erzurum).⁷⁸ In one fell swoop, the princes thus lost their right to maintain their own military forces, while at the same time they had to accept Roman military garrisons within their own lands. By another decree of March 18, 536, the five lands "formerly under satraps" were now placed under a Roman official sitting at Martyropolis in Greater Tsopk.⁷⁹ Thus, sometime between 528 and 536, it is clear that the Armenian princes had been dispossessed of their local authority.⁸⁰ Finally, by a series of laws dated 535, 536, and 543, the Armenians dwelling in the empire were required to divide their properties equally among their sons and daughters alike, decrees that effectively broke up their land holdings so that the Armenian princes were reduced simply to owners of large estates.⁸¹ Under the new Master of Soldiers, Justinian reorganized the imperial holdings in Armenia into four provinces named, respectively, First, Second, Third, and Fourth Armenia, the last being made up of the territory of the old *ethne/gentes/satrapiae*, which now no longer existed even in name.⁸²

After the reforms of Justinian, a number of new fortresses were built in this part of western Armenia. Everett Wheeler has shown that the western frontier of Armenia fluctuated as much as those on other sides of the country in the Roman period.⁸³ Procopius, the Byzantine historian of Justinian's reign, attests that the local Armenians living along the frontier between Roman and Persian Armenia crossed the frontier at will on market days and even intermarried as if the frontier did not exist.⁸⁴ Justinian changed all this—or attempted

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 174.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 174-75.

⁸⁰ Ibid. Toumanoff opts for 532 as the most likely year for this to have occurred.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 174.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Everett Wheeler, Duke University, personal communication.

⁸⁴ Procopius, *de aedificiis*, III.3.9-14.

to—by erecting one fortress named Artaleison in Khordzean⁸⁵ in northeastern Sophene, which the Armenians called Astghaber, near the town of Kghi, and a second one to the southeast in Hashtean, called Kitharizon at the Armenian village of Ktrich (Gdrich).⁸⁶

Ecclesiastically, the Church in Sophene was based on a combination of the Armenian and the Roman-Byzantine pattern. In general, each principality had its own bishop as in Greater Armenia, but unlike Armenia, where the bishops resided at the princely courts, each see seems to have been localized at a specific town as elsewhere in the empire. There was a superior bishop or metropolitan of upper "Mesopotamia" (that is, the Pentarchy) having his seat at Amida with suffragan bishops in Handzit (Anzitene), later centered at Dadima; Lesser Sophene, probably centered later at Khosomakhon; Ingilene (Angeghtun), at Ingila (Anggh); Greater Sophene, at an uncertain location; and Martyropolis, in the former district of Npret.⁸⁷ Though at the synod of Constantinople convoked in 536 a bishop of Balbitene is noted, there is no mention of a bishop of Asthianene. Nina Garsoïan takes the mention of a *klima* (district) of Astianike (*sic*) as evidence for a see of that name, so that the episcopal structure in the Pentarchy may or may not have conformed entirely to the political one.⁸⁸ Since the Armenian Church was not officially separated from that of the empire until the late sixth or possibly the early seventh century, these sees were distinct from those of Greater Armenia only in being subject to the metropolitan of Amida and through him to the Patriarch of Constantinople rather than to the Armenian Catholicos at Dvin.⁸⁹

But what happened to the five princely houses? We can only guess. Under the new dispensation, the princes kept their lands but

⁸⁵ Ibid., III.3.14.

⁸⁶ Ibid., III.3.7-8.

⁸⁷ Adontz, *Armenia*, p. 284. See also Nina G. Garsoïan, "Armenia Megale kai Eparkhia Mesopotamias," in *Eupsychia Mélanges offerts à Hélène Ahrweiler*, Série Byzantina Sorbonensia 16 (Paris: Sorbonne, 1998), pp. 240-64.

⁸⁸ Nina Garsoïan, "Some Preliminary Precisions on the Separation of the Armenian and Imperial Churches. I: The Presence of 'Armenian' Bishops at the First Five Oecumenical Councils," in *Kathegetria: Essays Presented to Joan Hussey on Her 80th Birthday* (Camberley, England: Porphyrogenitus, 1988), p. 273n97.

⁸⁹ Armenian historians tend to ignore the Armenian sees in the Byzantine Empire once the Armenian Church had broken with the Imperial Church, whose patriarch at Constantinople continued to consecrate the Armenian bishops within the empire.

had to divide them equally among their children. The next generation thus inherited not principalities, but simply large estates, the following generation would have inherited smaller estates, and the next still smaller ones until the once great Armenian princely dynasts would have been reduced to little more than farmers. Before that happened, however, it is likely that the descendants of the five Pentarchs migrated into the empire itself, swelling the ranks of the many Armenian nobles entering the Byzantine service.

The destruction of the Pentarchy meant the end of Armenian rule in this part of Armenia. Lost to control of the Armenian kingdom in 299, lost to local Armenian control by 536, this crucial Armenian region then passed from one dominating power to another, which included the Byzantines, the Arabs, the Seljuk Turks, the Mongols, and finally the Ottomans. In 1920, when President Woodrow Wilson drew up his famous western boundary of the projected state of Armenia, the entire territory of Tsopk, including the town of Kharpert and its Golden Plain, was left beyond the border.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Apart from the sources cited above, the following works contain additional material on Tsopk and its component districts: Heinrich Hübschmann, *Die altarmenischen Ortsnamen* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1904; repr. Amsterdam: Oriental Press, 1969); Arshak Alpoyachian, *Patmakan Hayastani sahmannere* [The Boundaries of Historical Armenia] (Cairo: Nor Astgh, 1950); Tadevos K. Hakobyan, *Hayastani patmakan ashkharhagrutyun: Urvagtser* [Historical Geography of Armenia: Outlines], 2d ed. (Erevan: Mitk, 1968); Robert H. Hewsen, "Introduction to Armenian Historical Geography IV: The *Vitaxates* of Arsacid Armenia: A Reexamination of the Territorial Aspects of the Institution," *Revue des études arméniennes*, n.s., 21 (1988-89): 271-319; and relevant articles in the *Haykakan Sovetakan Hanragitaran* [Armenian Soviet Encyclopedia], 12 vols. (Erevan: Armenian Academy of Sciences, 1974-1986).